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Order all officers to talk to SIU

Metro police Chief Dave Boothby is right to have drafted new rules ordering officers who witness a police shooting to co-operate with the special investigations unit, the civilian body that probes such incidents. They must turn over their notes and appear for an interview "forthwith."

While this is welcome, he should be instructing *all* officers — even those who did the actual shooting — to co-operate. This is what the Metro Police Services Board should be telling the chief at its meeting tomorrow.

The defiance and arrogance of officers and their union since the Hugh Dawson shooting underscores the need for this. Union leader Paul Walter sees the chief's directive as a "recipe for confrontation" and threatens legal action. Let him go to court.

All the chief has done is to direct officers to merely obey the current code of conduct that was developed by the solicitor-general, the attorney-general and the SIU in case of a police shooting. It enjoins "witness officers" to co-operate, but exempts "subject officers" so they don't incriminate themselves in violation of their Charter rights.

But even that cozy arrangement has failed the public repeatedly. It took witness officers 10 days to fully co-operate with the SIU following Dawson's death — with the officers offering all kinds of excuses. This does not reflect well on our justice system, the police force or the civilians appointed to oversee the force.

We need to make it a condition of employment that *all* officers involved in a police shooting co-operate fully with an investigation. The Charter argument is self-serving. In exchange for carrying a gun and having the right to use it when they must, officers have an obligation to co-operate with those investigating police shootings.

Police services board chair Maureen Prinsloo says the board was, in fact, developing its own protocol in 1993 but stopped when Bob Rae's New Democrats started to develop one for the province. But they lost to the Tories, who scrapped the whole plan.

It's time for the board to lay down the law for officers. Then let's see how well our law enforcement officers obey the law.

Keep up our guard